Land Use & Climate Change Advisory Committee

Areas of Focus

Summary of Preliminary Ideas

Background

At the first meeting of the Land Use & Climate Change Advisory Committee (June 6, 2008) an informal brainstorm was conducted to identify areas for possible exploration by the group. The primary purpose of the exercise was to provide Committee members with a sense of the range of interests and ideas among the group and to provide an informed basis for a more structure homework assignment Committee members will undertake in advance of its second meeting.

The items identified during this brainstorm are provided below. The items are a mix of key needs and interests, general and specific thoughts about potential areas of the Growth Management Act (GMA) for exploration, and other ideas that help establish the context for the Committee's deliberations. The ideas have been grouped into eight categories: GMA-As Currently Configured; GMA-Possible Areas of Change to Explore; Other Statutes/Legislation; Funding; Incentives and Costs; Urban Density/Infill; Transportation; Housing; Partnerships; and Other Ideas. Readers should note that the categories are not designed to be fully mutually exclusive, as several ideas could easily appear in more than one group.

GMA – As Currently Configured

- Examine the large portion of growth that has happened in smaller cities and rural areas, to understand the true cost of growth in the GMA.
- Distinguish rural and urban, and eastern and western areas in the GMA. Understand and accommodate differences between rural areas in the eastern side of the state and those on the western side.
- Prioritize some comprehensive plan elements over others.
    - Density and growth,
    - Tree retention and resource protection.
- Focus on placement of manufacturing, industry, and the transportation of goods.
- Improve the buildable land analyses to make them more useful and accurate.
- Common tool for analysis will enable us to identify subsidies through a transparent process.
- Consider how to incentivize agriculture and forest lands for public service rather than conversion (e.g., use of environmental markets to create alternative asset value).
- Identify and remove roadblocks to current GMA intent (e.g., constraints on urban infill development).
- Look at concurrency issues, such as multi modal approaches and making new projects (Redmond, Kirkland and other areas) more accessible to transit.

- Review the goals in the GMA for
    - Measurement
    - Effective management
    - Incentives/rewards
- Look at how to improve the Countywide Planning Policies (CPP) tool.
    - Better enable a regional approach to growth management.

GMA – Possible Areas of Change to Explore

- Specify how much carbon we can afford from our transportation and built environment as target allocated to local governments.
    - Consider the purchase of carbon offsets if they don't reach the targets
    - Provide tools and incentives.
- At what level should the Committee focus?
    - Ground level – zoning changes?
    - Higher level?
- Discuss the role the purchase of offsets could play.
- Examine siting requirements for facilities.
    - Build in a consideration for distance traveled
- Focus on reduction of GHG emissions and reducing dependence on foreign oil.
    - Remember charge of ESSB 6580

Other Statutes/Legislation

- Discuss the SEPA Checklist.
- Discuss Shoreline Master Plan updates.
- Consider how the Surface Transportation Act will affect funding for recommendations.
- Consider how cap and trade legislation will affect recommendations. How to feed calibration of GHG emissions into the cap and trade framework.
    - Changing technologies may influence the market system
    - Measurement
    - Role of, and opportunities for, local governments

Funding

- Discuss funding mechanisms to support cities and counties – must not create unfunded mandates.
- Consider funding for cities that we want to urbanize.
    - Provide funding for infrastructure to enable local governments to implement mandates.
    - Support for transportation choices
- Understand and factor into discussions the role of economic development in maintaining/increasing local government revenues.
- Look at subsidizing rates for public works investments.
- Consider funding for encouraging walking and biking.

- Invest in livable, walk-able, bike-able cities.
- Find funds for incentives.
- Be mindful of costs to school districts.
- Re-prioritizing funding is critical.

Incentives and Costs

- Encourage people to live in more densely populated areas.
- Provide more incentives than penalties for livable, walk-able, bicycle-enabled cities.
- Provide incentives and rewards for smart growth, green building, and alternative energy.
- Consider providing incentives for renting or purchasing property in urban areas.
- Look at market place drivers
    - Current demand focused on single occupancy, detached housing
- Provide incentives for
    - Green development
    - More development capacity
    - More height
- Protect job base and lifestyles.
- Re-prioritize funding for incentives if needed.
- Mix of carrots and sticks.
- Conduct empirical analysis of costs and subsidies.
- Need political courage to implement incentives.

Urban Density/ Infill

- Encourage density in largest cities and counties through the GMA,
    - Providing transportation choices
    - Make it easier to build in cities
- Look at ways to shift density from outer areas.
    - Negative environmental externalities not fully covered through availability of infrastructure such as sewer systems.
- Consider density in cities other than Seattle (benefits of development need to be shared).
- Promote infill and density.
- Identify and remove roadblocks to infill.
- Look at ratio of jobs to housing to encourage people to live close to their jobs.
- Discuss the economics of sprawl, quality of life issues.
- Provide amenities to draw people to more dense areas.
    - Water supply
    - Parks and recreation
- Discuss infill Issues:
    - Neighborhood resistance (Nimby)
    - Infrastructure
    - Zoning
    - Where is the market?
    - Job base
    - Economic base

- Prioritize density in urban areas.
    - Balance natural resource impacts
- Consider scalable density.

Transportation

- Creatively design for reducing the single occupancy vehicle.
- Provide transportation options, including from homes to transit stops.
- Invest in multimodal hubs
    - Zoning
    - Affordability choices
- Focus on transportation concurrency issues and multi-modal approaches.
- Provide non-motorized infrastructure.
    - But, who will be responsible?
- Broaden the definition of transportation options.
- Provide transportation to outer reaches of urban growth areas.
- Discuss transportation and other infrastructure priorities.

Housing

- Provide a variety of housing choices including a range of affordability options.
- Look at the affordability of housing.
- Look at the economics of development,
    - Effects of density on land values
    - Cost of housing
    - Zoning changes
- Weave in quality of life issues.
    - Food, energy, security
- Look at real estate disclosure documents from the standpoint of climate change adaptation.

Partnerships

- Planning partnerships between state, regional groups, and local jurisdictions.
    - Customize VMT goals
    - Development decisions through that lens.
- Coordination between cities and counties.
    - Lifting urban holding
    - Smart growth incentives
    - Funds for transit to support density
    - Walk-ability or biking
- International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and Local Governments.
- Cities have been very active.
    - Use their good ideas

Other Ideas

- Use tree retention in urban areas to consume the CO2 being generated.
- Work with agricultural community on the collection of methane,
    - Subsidizing the farming community
    - Cost/efficiency constraints
- Incentivize nuclear energy production and recognize it can substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions by lowering dependence on coal-fired electricity generation.
- Discuss snow melt and water supplies.
- Consider sequestering carbon:
    - Through crop choices and schedules
    - Availability of open space
- Discuss alternative fuel technologies such as cellulosic fiber conversions, methane, etc.
- Discuss managing forests to control wild fires (as a major source of emissions).
- Provide education and awareness for the general public.